

"Stolen Honor: Wounds That Never Heal," is said to portray Senator Kerry as, in essence, a traitor. Filmmaker Carlton Sherwood gives voice to former prisoners of war who claim Kerry's protests gave aid and comfort to their Vietnamese captors. Sherwood offered Kerry no chance to rebut the charges because "he's had 33 years of all the press coverage he's wanted." which is about as journalistically irresponsible as it gets.

Sinclair is calling the movie a news program in order to skirt the FCC rule requiring television stations to provide equal time to candidates for federal office. By giving Kerry no voice, "Stolen Honor" fails the basic smell test of news: fairness and balance.

A responsible broadcaster does not use the public airwaves for propaganda, particularly just days before an election. And make no mistake: that's what this is. Not "bias" with its suggestions of subtlety and subjectivity, but "propaganda," a tawdry attempt to swing an election.

The point would be precisely the same if the film offered one-sided praise of Kerry or condemnation of Bush. Or if CBS decided to air "Fahrenheit 9/11." That would be what this is. Flat-out wrong.

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard and a rubber stamp.

Thank you.